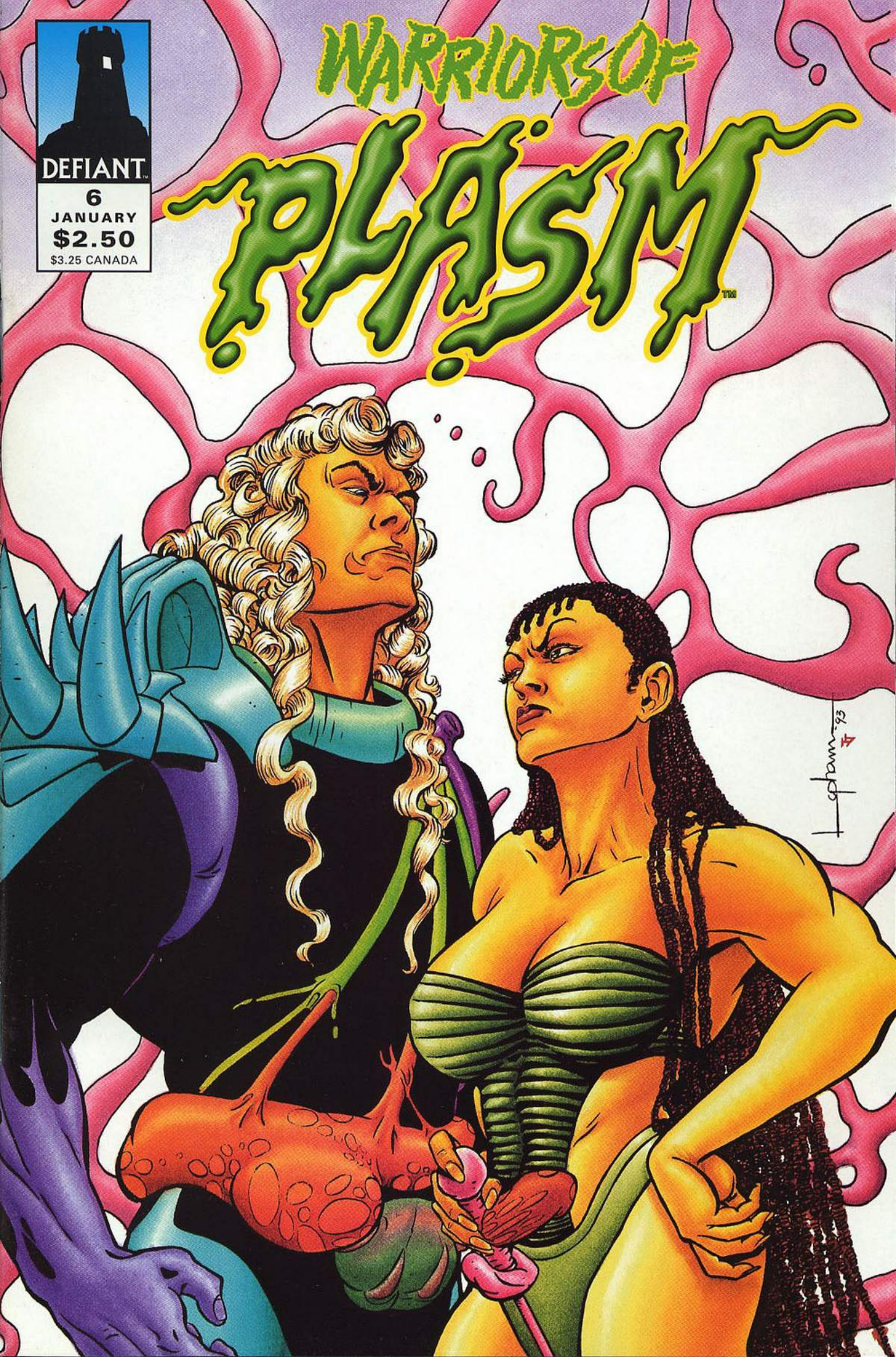
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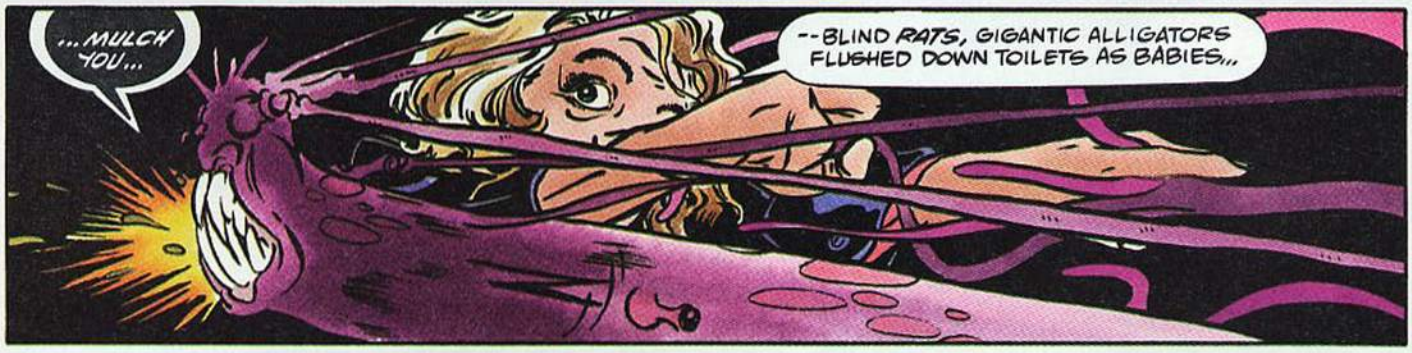
TM

COMING APART AT THE SEAMS...
THE DEMONS OF DARKEDGE--Part Two
BENEATH THE BENIGHTED STREETS OF MANHATTAN...
DEAR GOD!
WHAT IS THIS MONSTROSITY?
...WELCOME, MEAT...
WELCOME TO THE DYING PLACE...
PLOT BY JIM SHOOTER AND DAVID LAPHAM
SCRIPT BY LEN WEIN
PENCILED AND INKED BY DAVID LAPHAM
PAINTED BY TOM ZIUKO
LETTERED BY ROD OLLERENSHAW
EDITED BY DEBORAH PURCELL



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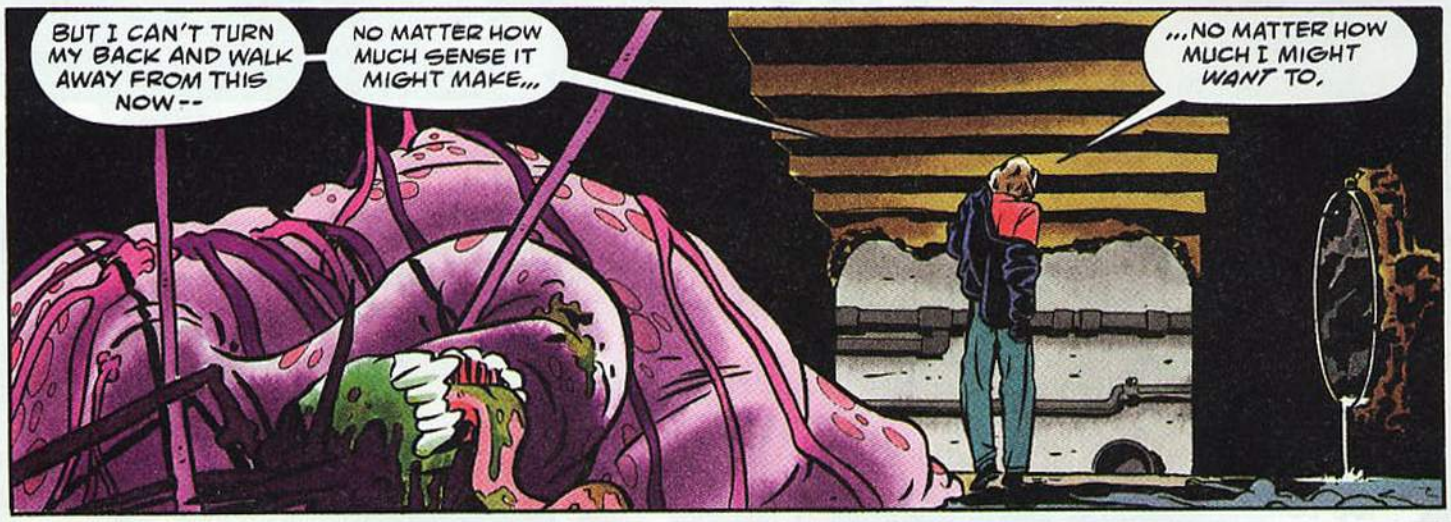
EVEN DURING ALL MY TIME TRAPPED ON *PLASM*, I NEVER FACED ANYTHING AS *AWFUL* AS THAT!
JUST TOUCHING IT MAKES ME FEEL FILTHY... *HORRIBLY* UNCLEAN.


BUT I CAN'T TURN MY BACK AND WALK AWAY FROM THIS NOW--
NO MATTER HOW MUCH SENSE IT MIGHT MAKE...
...NO MATTER HOW MUCH I MIGHT *WANT* TO.

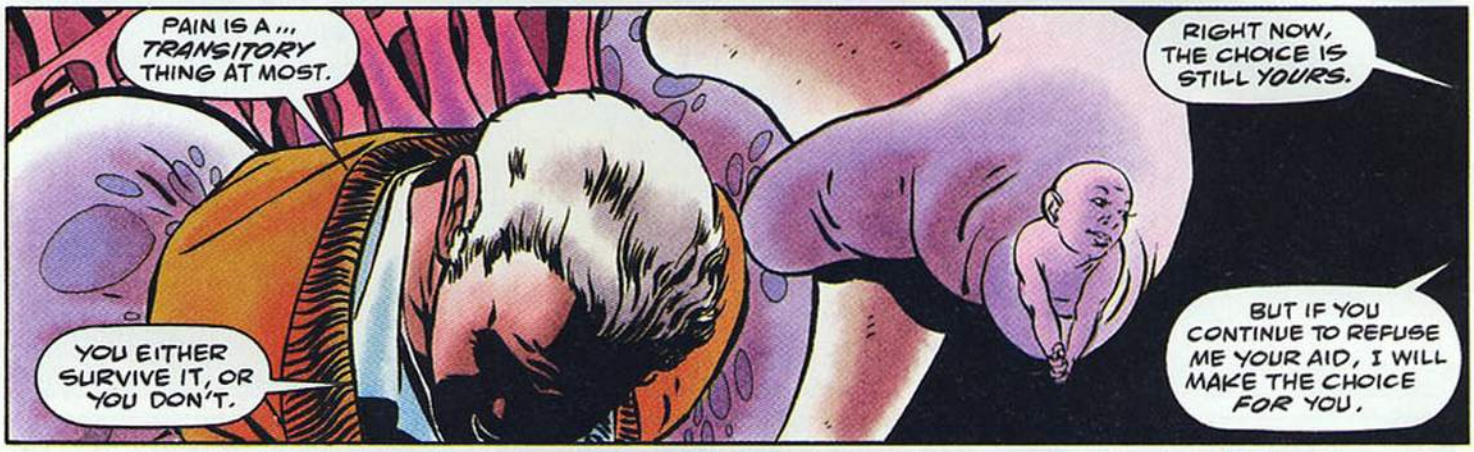
I PROMISED MICHAEL ALEXANDER I'D DO WHAT I CAN TO HELP HIM AGAINST THESE MONSTROSITIES...

BUT NOW *MICHAEL* HAS DISAPPEARED, TOO...

...AND HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WHAT MAY HAVE *HAPPENED* TO HIM.

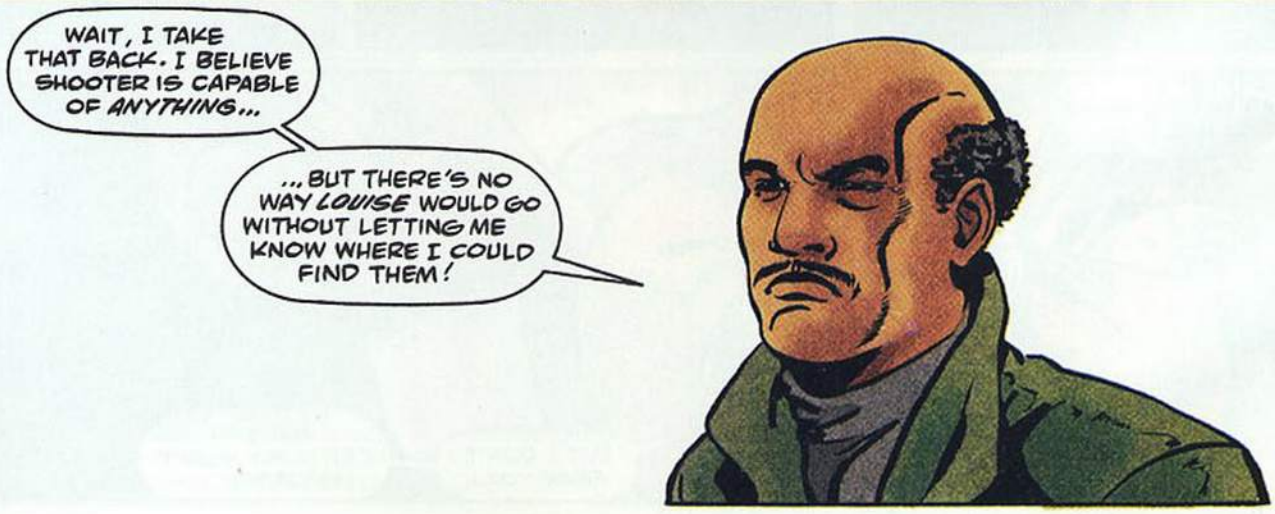
YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU *WANT* TO ME...
BUT I DON'T *FEAR* YOU...
...AND I CERTAINLY WON'T *HELP* YOU.

THIS IS A BITE WHIP, FOOL!
WHEN WIELDED BY A MASTER, IT CAN CAUSE PAIN BEYOND YOUR POWERS OF COMPREHENSION!
UNHH!

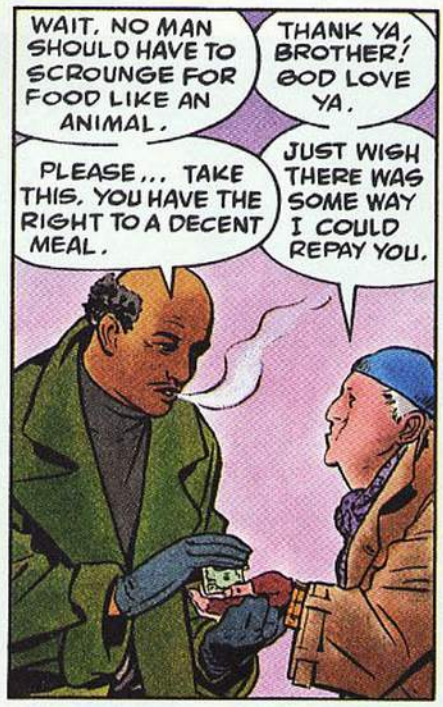

PAIN IS A... TRANSITORY THING AT MOST.
YOU EITHER SURVIVE IT, OR YOU DON'T.
RIGHT NOW, THE CHOICE IS STILL YOURS.
BUT IF YOU CONTINUE TO REFUSE ME YOUR AID, I WILL MAKE THE CHOICE FOR YOU.

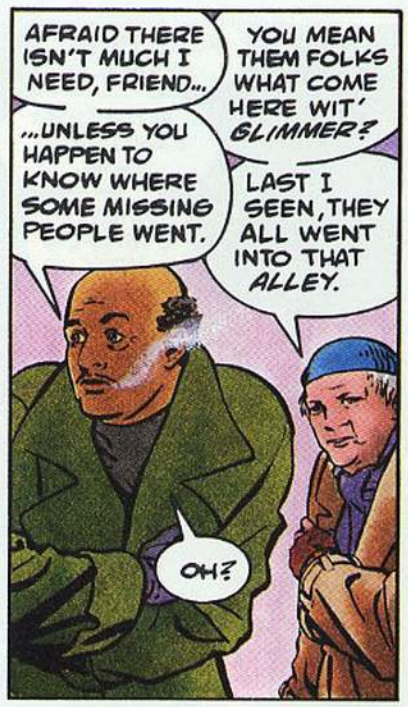
5:06 A.M.
ON THE STREETS ABOVE...
I'M PRETTY CERTAIN THIS IS THE CORNER WHERE LOUISE'S PHONE MESSAGE ASKED ME TO MEET HER...
...BUT NOW I CAN'T FIND A TRACE OF HER OR THE OTHERS.

GRANTED, I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HERE SEVERAL HOURS AGO...
...BUT I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'D ALL JUST TAKE OFF WITHOUT ME!


WAIT, I TAKE THAT BACK. I BELIEVE SHOOTER IS CAPABLE OF ANYTHING...
...BUT THERE'S NO WAY LOUISE WOULD GO WITHOUT LETTING ME KNOW WHERE I COULD FIND THEM!

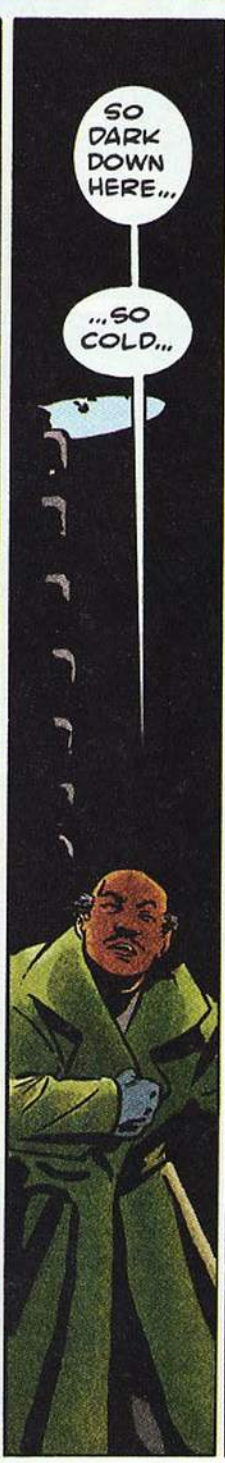
SO, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW?
HEY, THIS LOOKS KINDA EDIBLE....
HUH?


WAIT. NO MAN SHOULD HAVE TO SCROUNGE FOR FOOD LIKE AN ANIMAL.
THANK YA, BROTHER! GOD LOVE YA.
PLEASE... TAKE THIS. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO A DECENT MEAL.
JUST WISH THERE WAS SOME WAY I COULD REPAY YOU.


AFRAID THERE ISN'T MUCH I NEED, FRIEND...
YOU MEAN THEM FOLKS WHAT COME HERE WIT' GLIMMER?
...UNLESS YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE SOME MISSING PEOPLE WENT.
LAST I SEEN, THEY ALL WENT INTO THAT ALLEY.
OH?

WELL, I'LL BE!
LOOK AT ALL THE FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW...
...ALL LEADING DOWN INTO THAT HOLE.
IF I HAD ANY SENSE, I'D TURN BACK NOW...

BUT IF I HAD HAD ANY SENSE, I'D NEVER HAVE GOTTEN INVOLVED IN THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE!


SO DARK DOWN HERE...
...SO COLD...

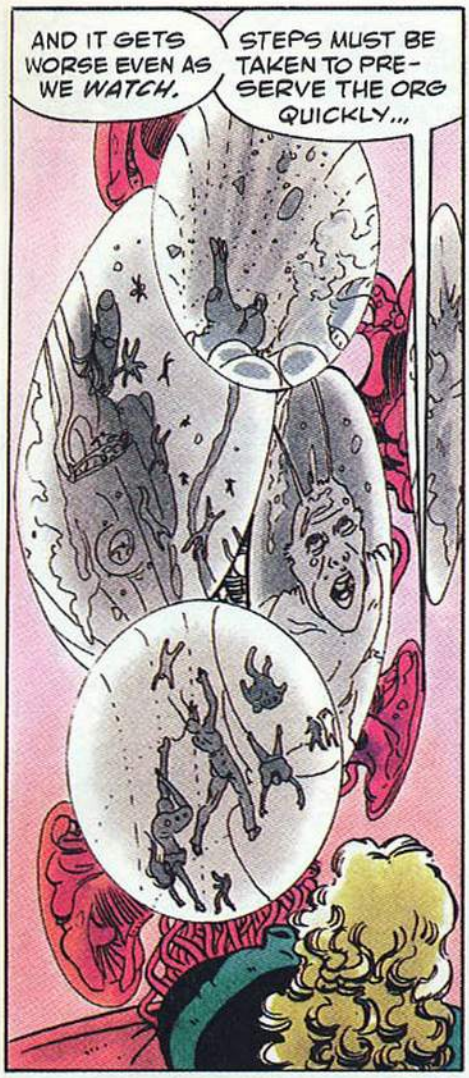
...NEVER FELT SO COLD...
...SO DARK...
...SO ALONE...
...ALONE...

NO!
HAVE TO GET OUT--
OUT INTO THE LIGHT!
--SWEET LIGHT!

FORGIVE ME, GLORY...
...BUT I JUST CAN'T DO THIS...
...NOT EVEN FOR YOU!
...MAKE YOU SUFFER...
...MAKE YOU WEEP...
THIS IS MADNESS...
...SHEER INSANITY!
...MAKE YOU OURS...
WHERE IS MARTIN WHEN I REALLY NEED HIM?
AND WHERE IN BLAZES IS MICHAEL ALEXANDER?!
I'M SO GROSSLY OUTNUMBERED HERE--
I'M IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.
...WE WILL DEVOUR YOU, MEAT...
...WE WILL SWALLOW YOU WHOLE...
DEEP, DEEP TROUBLE!

BEYOND THE IMAGINARY LIMITS OF REALITY...
"THE DAY IS OURS, BROTHER AND SISTER PLASMOIDS..."
...AND NOW SO ARE THE PRECIOUS PLASM BANKS!
WITHOUT THEM, HOW MUCH LONGER CAN THE TYRANT LORCA STAND?
DID I NOT PROMISE YOU VICTORY?
DID I NOT SWEAR THAT ALL WE'VE BEEN DENIED WILL SOON BE OURS AT LAST?
IS THERE NOW ANYONE HERE WHO DISPUTES THE WORD OF MONGREL RUDE?
AND SO IT GOES ALL OVER THE ORG, MY EMPEROR--
--THE MINIONS OF MONGREL RUDE ARE CREATING CHAOS IN EVERY QUADRANT!
HE SEEKS TO OVERTHROW ME, STRIFE LORD GOITEROX...
...AND HE IS NOT ALONE.

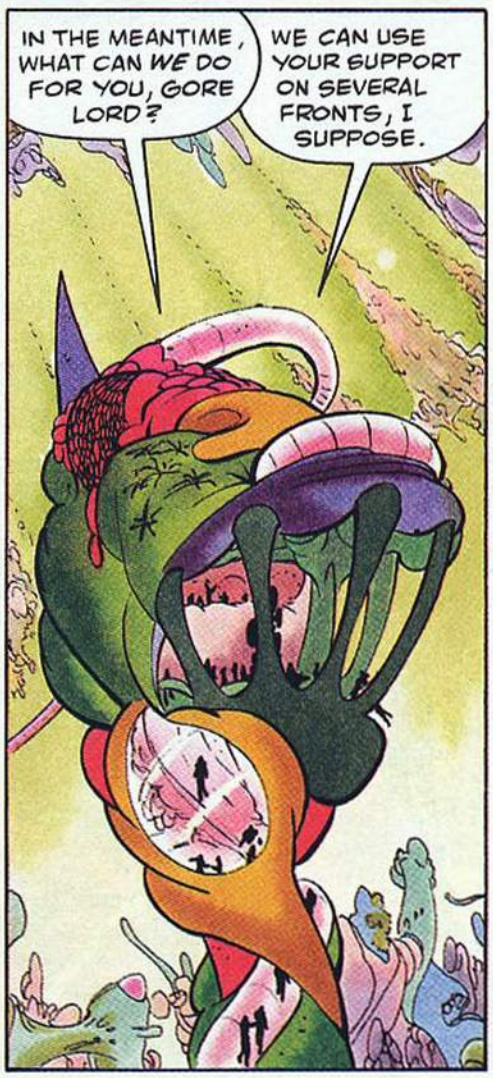
ALL ACROSS THE ORG, GANGS OF SLUDGE SLAVES ARE REVOLTING AS WELL...
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE!
...AND ALL WE'VE STRUGGLED SO HARD TO ATTAIN IS COLLAPSING INTO RUIN.
I ONCE TOLD MY BELOVED LAYGEN THIS WAS AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, BUT NOW--
NOW LAYGEN IS GONE, AND IT REMAINS FOR THOSE OF US STILL LIVING TO CLEAN UP HER MESS!
ENOUGH, SUERACEEN!
I AM BRUTALLY AWARE OF YOUR DISSATISFACTION WITH OUR CURRENT SITUATION!
DISSATISFACTION? IS THAT ALL YOU THINK THIS IS?
FOR A THIMBLEFUL OF PLASM, I'D GLADLY TWISTRIP YOU SLOWLY AND FEED YOUR NODES TO THE MULCHERS, YOU PUSILLANIMOUS PUSPUMP!
I'M DRIPPING WITH GORE FROM DEFENDING YOUR NEW POLICIES, LORCA...
...AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I'M NOT ENJOYING MY--
ORG'S PHLEGM!
THE GROUNDSKIN IS CONVULSING AGAIN!
IT'S THE FOURTH TIME IN AS MANY DAYS!
THIS IS NOT GOOD!
WELL, WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? SINCE WE'VE STOPPED CONQUERING OTHER WORLDS FOR THEIR RESOURCES...
...THE ORG HAS BEGUN TO FEED ON ITSELF!


AND IT GETS WORSE EVEN AS WE *WATCH.*
STEPS MUST BE TAKEN TO PRE-SERVE THE ORG QUICKLY...

...YET WITHOUT RETURNING TO THE BARBAROUS OLD WAYS OF-- HUH?
TRANSPORTRON PHASING IN, LORCA....
NOW WHAT?

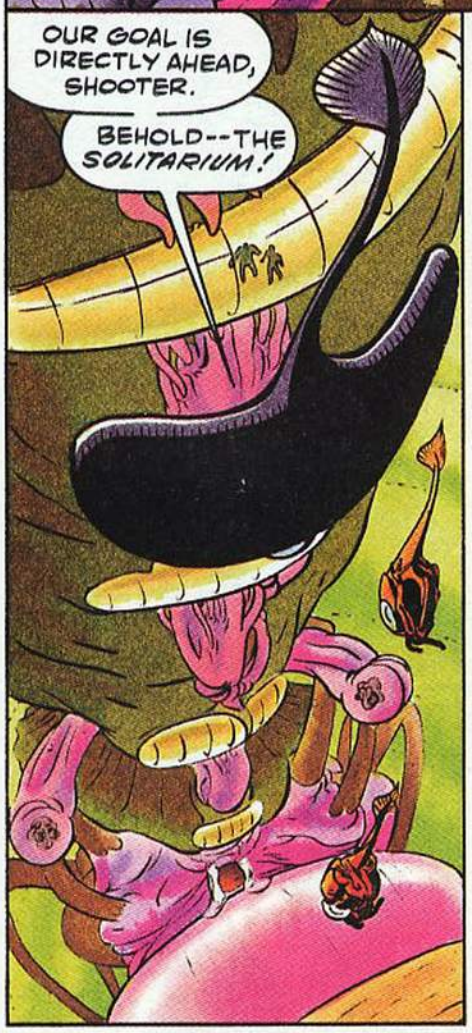
...IT APPEARS HOOKY HAS RETURNED TO US IN *TRIUMPH!*
BOY, WHAT A RIDE!
YEAH. I'D HOPED WE WERE DONE WITH THIS PLACE *FOREVER.*
CAN'T BELIEVE WE AGREED TO COME *BACK* HERE.
BUT WE PROMISED GLORY WE'D DO WHAT WE CAN TO *HELP!*

WELCOME BACK TO THE MOST HOLY ORG OF *PLASM,* MY FRIENDS.
I STILL THINK WE COULD HAVE HANDLED THIS *WITHOUT* THEM.
WHERE ARE THE POWERFUL ONES?
MRS. J AND REVEREND GILBERT WILL BE ALONG SOON.


IN THE MEANTIME, WHAT CAN *WE* DO FOR YOU, GORE LORD?
WE CAN USE YOUR SUPPORT ON SEVERAL FRONTS, I SUPPOSE.

THE EARTHLING CALLED NUDGE WILL STAY HERE TO ASSIST THE EMPEROR....
MOUSE! SHOOTER! YOU WILL COME WITH *ME.*
DON'T HAVE TO ASK ME TWICE, BABE.

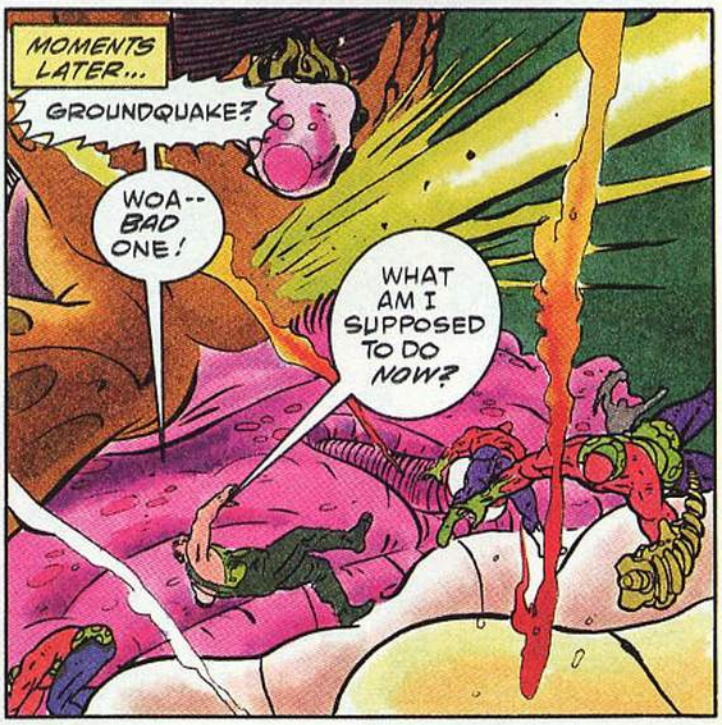
SHORTLY...
THANKS FOR THE NEW DUDS, SUERACEEN.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE OF ANY USE TO ME, EARTHER, YOU NEED TO BE PROPERLY DRESSED.
OUTFIT STILL FEELS LIKE THE INSIDE OF MY DOG'S MOUTH, SISTER!
SO... WHERE YOU TAKIN' US?


OUR GOAL IS DIRECTLY AHEAD, SHOOTER.
BEHOLD--THE SOLITARIUM!

IT IS THE MOST ELABORATE RESTRAINT CHAMBER IN ALL THE ORG...
...DESIGNED SOLELY TO CONTAIN ONE PRISONER!
SOUNDS LIKE A MAJOR WASTE OF PLASM, SUE.
WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST HAVE HER MULCHED?

THAT IS NONE OF YOUR CONCERN.
YOU NEED ONLY BE AWARE THAT THE CREATURE CALLED PRUDENCE IS THE MOST DANGEROUS IN THE UNIVERSE!

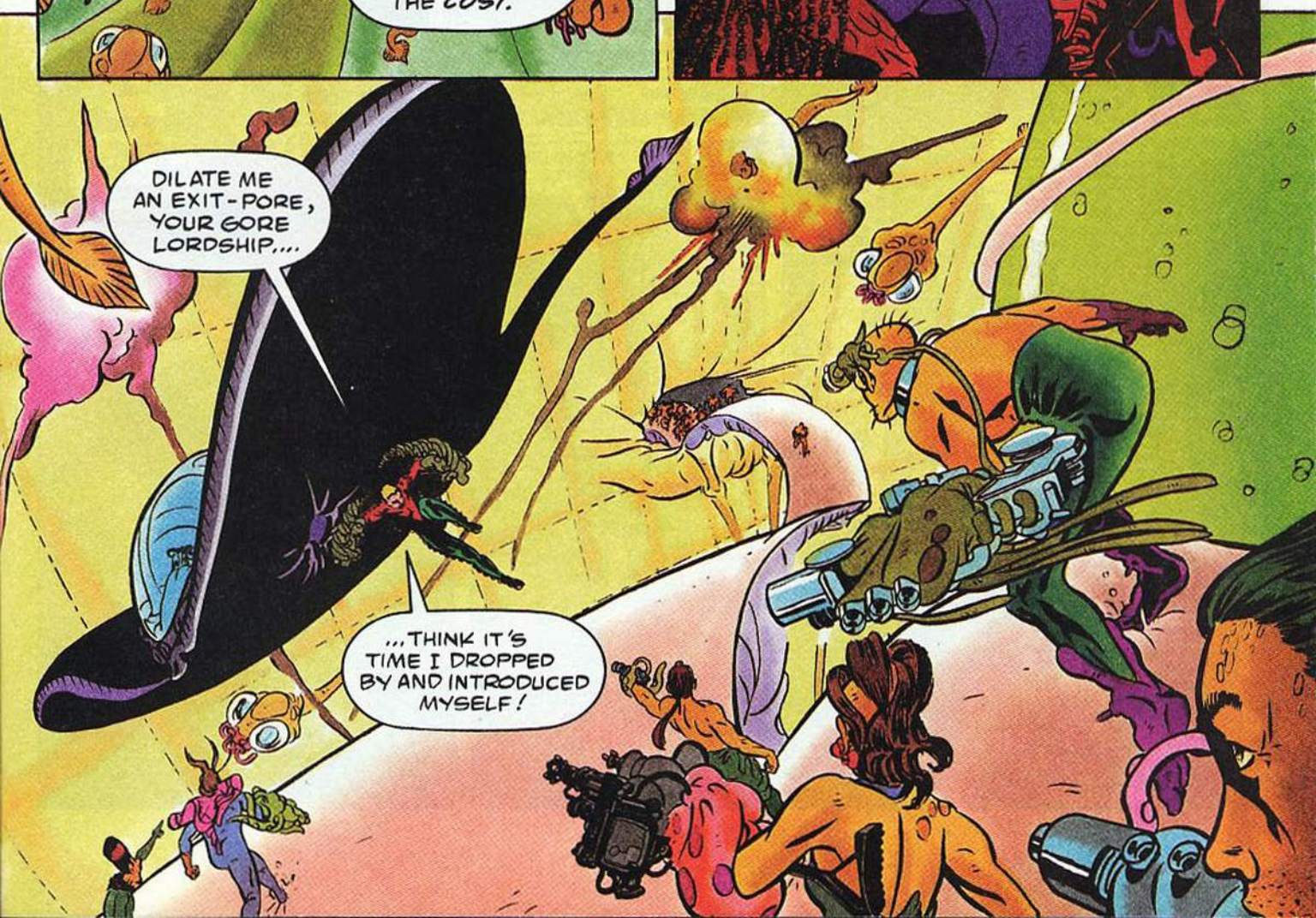
YOU WILL GUARD HER, MOUSE -- WITH YOUR LIFE, IF NEED BE.
SHOOTER WILL HELP ME ATTEND TO OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.
I'LL DO MY BEST, MA'AM.

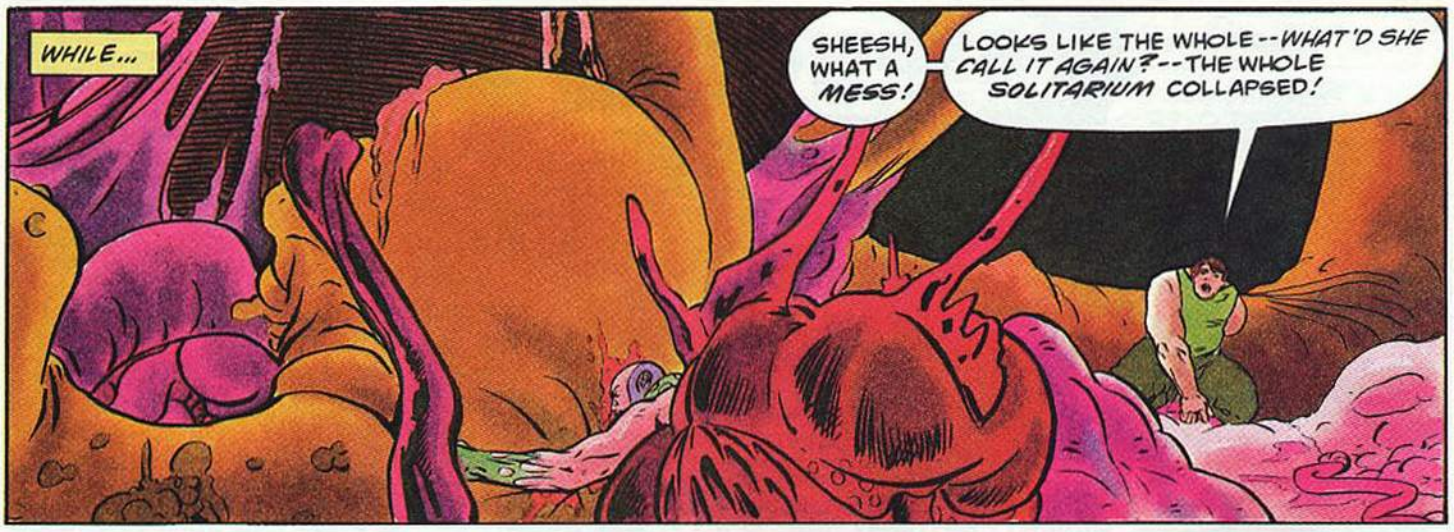

MOMENTS LATER...
GROUNDQUAKE?
WOA-- BAD ONE!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW?

WHILE, ELSEWHERE...
NICE THINKIN', SUE -- LEAVING THAT OVER-GROWN MOUSE TO PULL GUARD DUTY.
HE'S WAY TOO BIG AND SLOW FOR COMBAT.
WE EACH SERVE THE ORG IN OUR OWN WAY, SHOOTER.
AND YOU WILL HENCEFORTH ADDRESS ME AS GORE LORD SUERACEEN!
WELL, AIN'T YOU THE TOUCHY ONE?
ONE CASUAL LUST-GAME DOES NOT MAKE YOU MY FAMILIAR, LET ALONE MY EQUAL.

WE HAVE A JOB TO DO, EARTHER -- LET'S CONCENTRATE ON THAT.
BELOW US ARE THE PLASM BANKS, CAPTURED THIS MORNING BY THE REBEL MONGREL RUDE.
OUR MISSION IS TO RECLAIM THEM, NO MATTER THE COST.

OUR SKYSCOURGE HAS GREAT FIREPOWER...
...BUT WE RISK IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO THE BANKS IF WE MAINTAIN THE ASSAULT!
HEY, IF THAT'S YOUR ONLY PROBLEM, BABE...
THERE AIN'T NO PROBLEM!


DILATE ME AN EXIT-PORE, YOUR GORE LORDSHIP....
...THINK IT'S TIME I DROPPED BY AND INTRODUCED MYSELF!


WHILE...
SHEESH, WHAT A MESS!
LOOKS LIKE THE WHOLE--WHAT'D SHE CALL IT AGAIN?--THE WHOLE SOLITARIUM COLLAPSED!

SEEMS MOST OF THE GUARD-ZOMS WERE PULPED...
...BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PRISONER...
...WHAT ABOUT THIS "PRUDENCE"?

MAYBE IT'S JUST SHIFTING RUBBLE...
...BUT I COULD SWEAR I HEAR SOMEBODY WEEPING BELOW.

HANG ON, MISS!
HELP IS ON THE WAY!

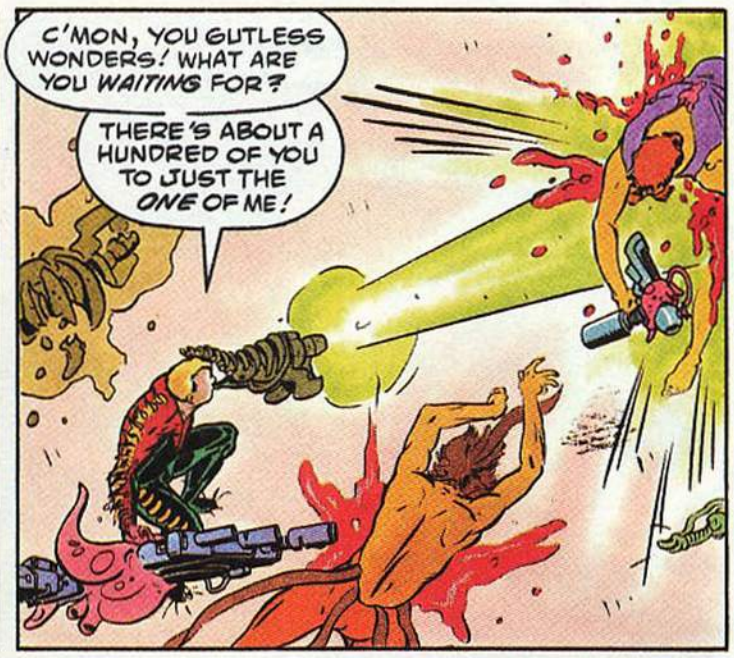
JUST KEEP MAKING NOISE UNTIL I CAN FIND--
HEY, THERE YOU ARE!
...GONE...
...MEMBRANE IS... GONE...

KEEP YOUR WEAPONS STIMULATED!
IF SHE MOVES TO ESCAPE--
EXTINGUISH HER!

EASY NOW, MISS, WE'D BETTER MAKE SURE YOU'RE OKAY BEFORE--HEY!
...FREE...
AFTER SO LONG... FREE!

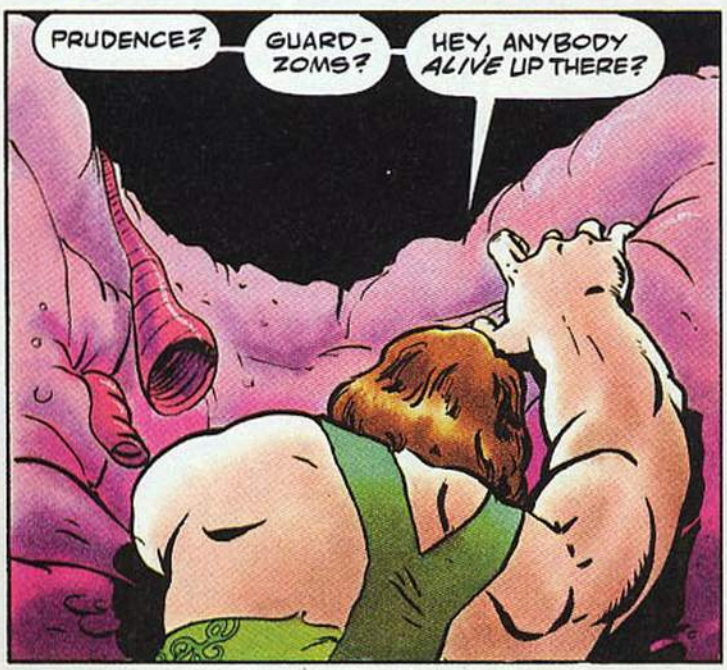
OPEN FIRE!
FREEEEE!
HEY-- WAIT!
CEASE FIRE, YOU STUPID--
--YOU'RE LIABLE TO HIT--
UUNNHH!
--Meeeee
WHILE...
C'MON, YOU SORRY-LOOKIN' SUCKERS! YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?
TRY AN' TAKE IT!
I'LL RIP YOUR LOUSY HEADS OFF AND SPIT DOWN YOUR NECKS, YOU MISER-ABLE--
HEY!
OFF-WORLD SCUM! YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED WHERE YOU BELONG!
NOW I WILL GUT YOU LIKE A BEAST AND FEED YOU TO THE MULCHERS!
OH?
DON'T BET ON IT, MOOK!
THE TRIM ON THIS OUTFIT AIN'T JUST FOR SHOW, Y'KNOW!

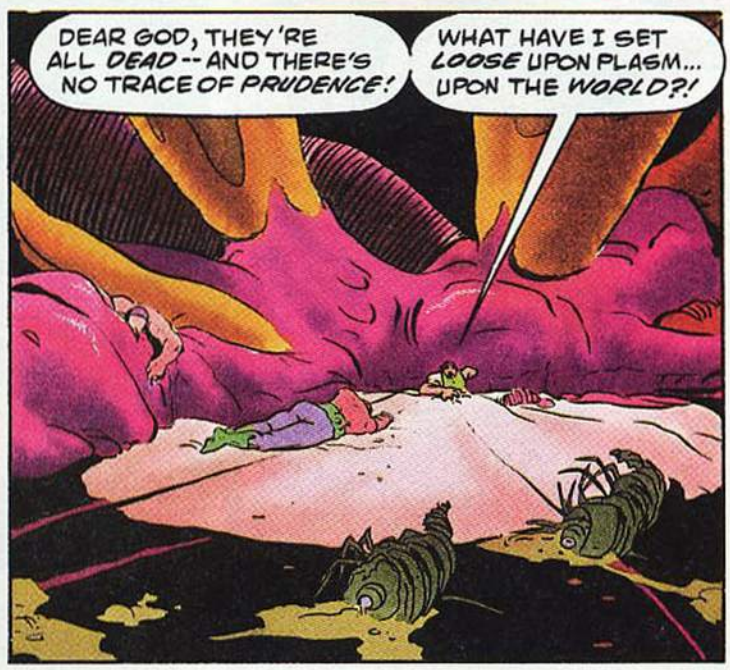
GET MY POINT?
IN FACT, WHY NOT HAVE SEVERAL OF THEM!
=UUNGKK=


C'MON, YOU GUTLESS WONDERS! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
THERE'S ABOUT A HUNDRED OF YOU TO JUST THE ONE OF ME!

NEAR AS I CAN FIGURE IT, THAT MAKES THE ODDS ABOUT EVEN!

WHILE...
JEEZ, MY POOR HEAD...
FEELS LIKE GODZILLA HAS BEEN TAP-DANCING ON IT....


PRUDENCE?
GUARD-ZOMS?
HEY, ANYBODY ALIVE UP THERE?


DEAR GOD, THEY'RE ALL DEAD -- AND THERE'S NO TRACE OF PRUDENCE!
WHAT HAVE I SET LOOSE UPON PLASM... UPON THE WORLD?!

SOMEWHERE BENEATH NEW YORK CITY...
BEHOLD THE FACE OF OUR MUTUAL ENEMY....
YOU DO KNOW HIM, DON'T YOU?
I BELIEVE HE CALLS HIMSELF CHASM.
FEW PEOPLE KNOW HIM BETTER THAN I...
...BUT THAT'S NOT SUFFICIENT REASON FOR ME TO ANSWER TO YOU.
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT LISTENING.
BUT YOU HAVE TO HELP ME!
YOU'VE GOT TO FORCE HIM TO SEND ME HOME!

HAVE YOU NO PITY? HAVE YOU NO MERCY?
THIS WORLD IS A MAD-HOUSE...
...AND EVERY SECOND I REMAIN HERE BRINGS ME CLOSER TO GOING MAD MYSELF!
AH! THE SLEEP-SPINNER RETURNS!
PERHAPS THIS WILL CONVINCE YOU TO HELP ME.

YOU DO RECOGNIZE HER, DON'T YOU?
MRS. JOHNSON?!
OR GLORY, AS SHE HAS COME TO BE KNOWN ON THE MOST HOLY ORG OF PLASM!

IT WAS IN PURSUIT OF GLORY AND HER COHORTS THAT MY STAFF OF DNABLERS AND I FIRST ACCOMPANIED LORCA TO THIS CURSED WORLD!
HE ORDERED US TO SET UP A FIELD LAB AND WAIT TO BE SUMMONED...
...BUT THAT CALL TO ACTION NEVER CAME!
THEN HE AND THE OTHERS FLED BACK TO PLASM AND LEFT US BEHIND... ABANDONED... FORGOTTEN!
THAT WAS WHEN CHASM FOUND US, AND COMPELLED US TO DO HIS BIDDING....

HE FORCED US TO CONSTRUCT PLASBEASTS FROM LOCAL RESOURCES! IT WAS CREATIVE AGONY!
YOU DON'T KNOW THE TRUE MEANING OF AGONY, SON...
WHO--?
BUT IF YOU DON'T RELEASE MY FRIENDS IMMEDIATELY...
I CAN PROMISE YOU, YOU'RE GOING TO LEARN.
NO! NOT YOU!
SORRY IT TOOK ME SO LONG TO GET HERE, LOUISE...
...BUT I HAD A FEW DEMONS OF MY OWN TO DEAL WITH.
NOW, ARE YOU GOING TO LET THEM GO, PLASMOID...
...OR DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS THE HARD WAY?

WHILE...
LORCA, WE NEED TO TALK!
WHAT IS IT NOW, SUERACEEN?

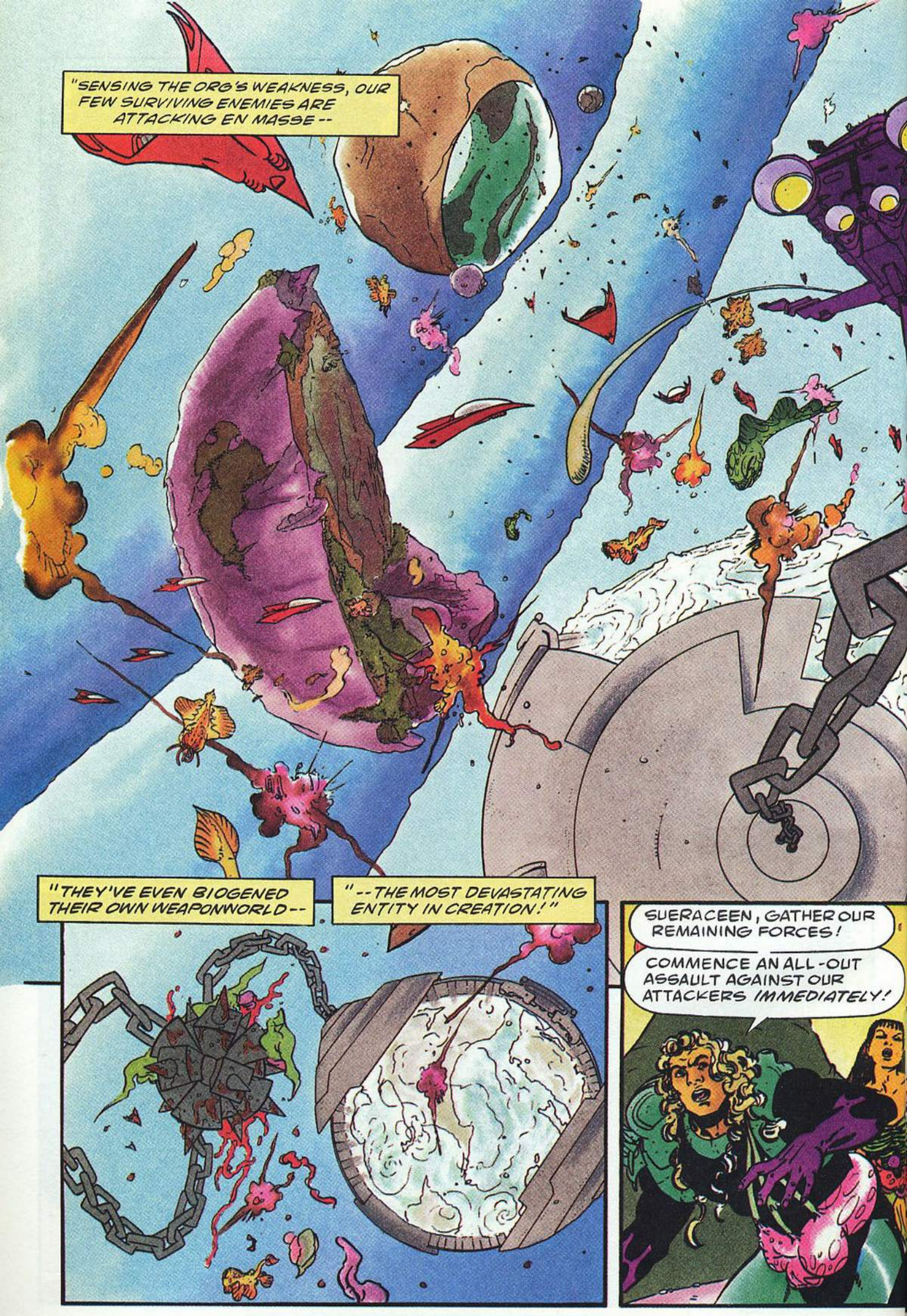
OUR FORCES ARE DWINDLING, AND I FEEL YOU'RE GIVING ME NO SUPPORT!
OTHER THAN THAT, THINGS ARE JUST FINE!
YOUR DISPLEASURE IS DULY NOTED, GORE LORD, AS IS YOUR SARCASM...
...BUT WE'RE DOING THE BEST WE CAN.
LORCA, THE ORG IS NERVOUS, BUT WHAT IT'S TELLING ME...
OH! THIS JUST ISN'T POSSIBLE!
WELL, THAT JUST ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH, EMPEROR!

THE EMP CAN DEAL WITH YOUR PETTY PROBLEMS LATER, EARTHER!
NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR DISSENSION, GORE LORD. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO--
RIGHT NOW I DEMAND HIS UNDIVIDED ATTENTION--
--OR I MAY JUST DIVIDE HIM!

ORG'S PHLEGM!
NOW WHAT?
I TRIED TO WARN YOU!

THAT WAS NOT JUST ANOTHER CONVULSION, LORCA!
THE SKINSHEATH IS WEEPING...BLEEDING!
THAT WAS AN ASSAULT FROM WITHOUT THE ORG!

BUT WHAT--PHLEGM!
IT IS THE DAY I HAVE DREADED ABOVE ALL OTHERS!


"SENSING THE ORG'S WEAKNESS, OUR FEW SURVIVING ENEMIES ARE ATTACKING EN MASSE --
"THEY'VE EVEN BIOGENED THEIR OWN WEAPONWORLD --
"-- THE MOST DEVASTATING ENTITY IN CREATION!"
SUERACEEN, GATHER OUR REMAINING FORCES!
COMMENCE AN ALL-OUT ASSAULT AGAINST OUR ATTACKERS IMMEDIATELY!

"--KNOWING WE'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO FULLY DEFEND OURSELVES.
"THAT WEAPONWORLD'S SKYSPIKES ARE TEARING GAPING WOUNDS IN THE ORG'S SKINSHEATH WITH EVERY BLOW--
"--AND WE LACK THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO EFFECT REPAIRS!"
THE FATE OF OUR GLORIOUS ORG NOW RESTS IN YOUR HANDS!
DO NOT DROP IT!!
LORCA, THE ORG IS IN AGONY!

WELL, GET GOING, GORE LORD!
WHY DO YOU HESITATE?
I AM NOT SOME DOG, LORCA, TO BLINDLY DO MY MASTER'S BIDDING!
DEAR LORD-- SHE'S IN SUCH PAIN!

DESPITE THE DANGER TO THE ORG, I AM NO LONGER CERTAIN I WISH TO SERVE YOU.
PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO RETHINK MY ALLEGIANCE.

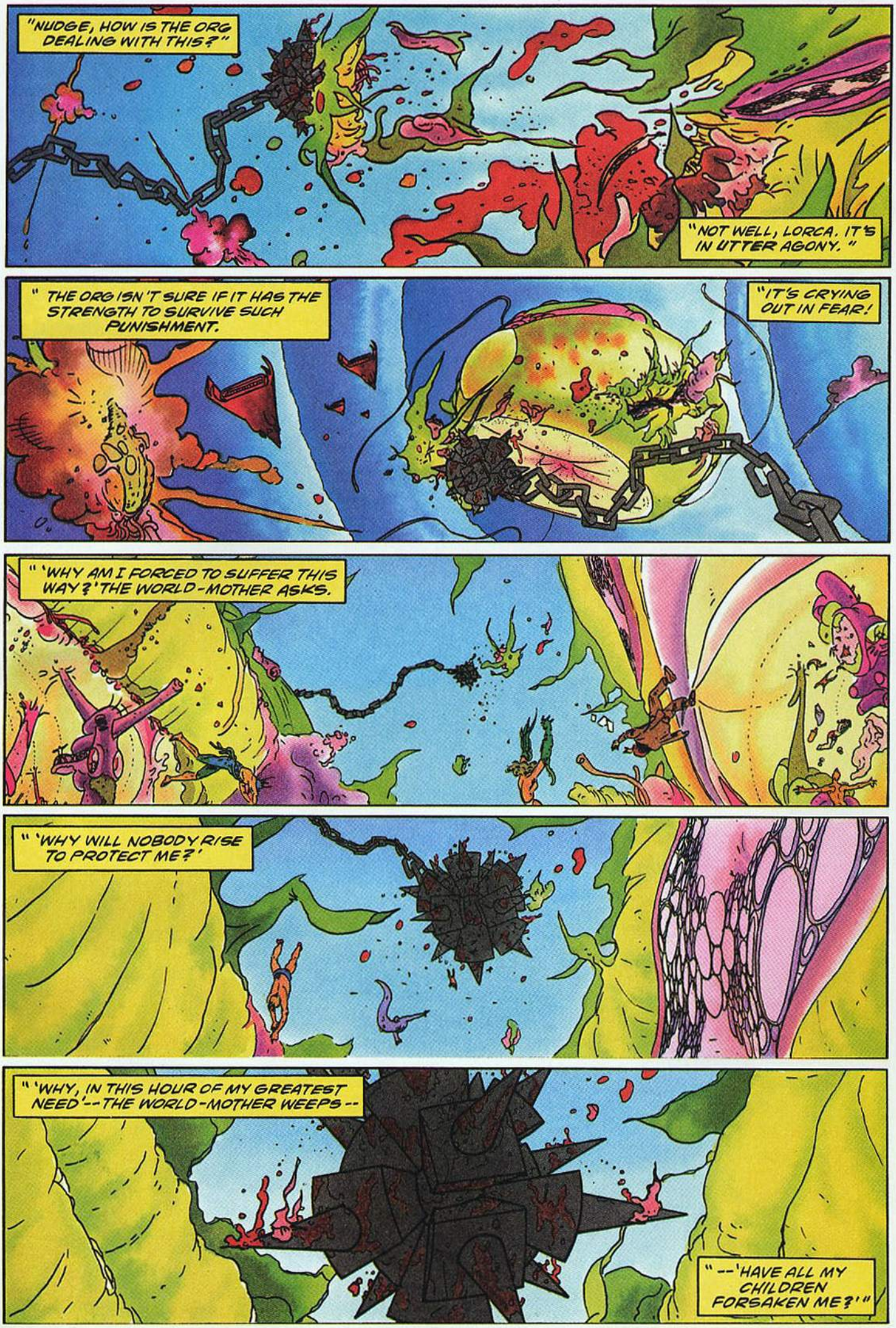
NOW IS NOT THE TIME, SUERACEEN! THE ORG NEEDS YOU.
VERY WELL, LORCA, I WILL DO AS YOU ASK...
...BUT YOU KNOW MY PRICE.
EXTORTION, GORE LORD?
THE CHOICE IS YOURS... MY EMPEROR.

ALL RIGHT, SUERACEEN. FOR THE SAKE OF THE ORG...
...YOUR PRICE WILL BE MET.

NOW GET OUT OF OF HERE...
...BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND.
ALWAYS REMEMBER, LORCA--THE DECISION WAS YOURS.

THIS IS NOT GOING AT ALL WELL.
I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, LORCA.
HAVE I ANY CHOICE? I MUST--

ORG'S PHLEGM!
OH, GOD--THE PAIN!
THE PAIN!!



NEXT: **ENTER--WORLDWRECKER!**